

INTIMATE
NEXT ACT
THEATRE
POWERFUL



29 Years of Theatre

29 Years of Performance (1990-2019)

In June of 1990, Next Act Theatre was created with the merger of Next Generation Theatre and Theatre Tesseract. After joining the two theatre companies, Next Act began its journey with a subscriber base of 1,000. Leading the ambitious new theatre company were Producer Jane Barclay Mandel, Artistic Director Jonathan Smoots, and Associate Artistic Director David Ceccarini.

1990 - 1992

Playing in the Public Library's Centennial Hall, the first two years were an exercise in patience for this young theatre company. The work was critically acclaimed but the 8th and Wisconsin location proved a challenge for attracting new audiences. Near the end of its second year, Smoots and Ceccarini realized that, to survive, they needed to move Next Act downtown and restructure the company.

1992 - 1993

In 1992, with the help of positive sales, strong support from angel Jack Rosenberg, and playing in the Todd Wehr and Stiemke Theaters, Next Act embarked on a reduced, three-production season. At this time Smoots decided to explore other artistic opportunities, leaving Ceccarini to assume the Producing Director position. He did, however, stay on as Artistic Associate for another three seasons.

Ceccarini was in need of a business partner, and in the summer of 1992, Charles Kakuk, who was working in marketing at the Milwaukee Ballet, reached out to fill this need. His phone call began



a long and successful relationship with Ceccarini and the company. Kakuk brought many administrative talents to Next Act Theatre along with his winning smile.

1993 - 1995

The next two seasons saw encouraging growth for Next Act as the theatre continued to stage three productions per year at the Stiemke Theater in the Milwaukee Rep complex.

1995 - 1998

By the 1995-96 season, the company had regained sufficient strength to add a fourth production. This made it necessary to secure an alternate space for one production per season. The Broadway Theatre Center's Studio Theatre, the Humphrey Masonic Center and Marquette's Helfaer Theatre each supplied that fourth venue through these years. Additional staff members were also brought on: C. Michael Wright as Associate Artistic Director in 1996 and Jonathan West as Marketing & Development Manager in 1997.

1998 - 2000

Seeing a need to establish a home space that could accommodate the growing number of theatre patrons, the goal was set to build a theatre which could seat between 150-175 patrons. However, a suitable and affordable venue was not found, and an interim, 99-seat theatre space was created at 342 N Water Street on the second floor. Housed in the same building as Next Act's offices and rehearsal space, the Off Broadway Theatre [named by Jack Rosenberg] opened in early 2000. The first production was A NIGHT IN NOVEMBER, a contemporary, Irish one-man show starring James Ridge, directed by Wright.

The summer of 2000 also marked the third season of Next Actors: Summer Theatre for Teens. Next Actors is a six-week playwriting and performance seminar that allows 16-20 students, free of charge, to experience the thrill of theatre. With the guidance of professional teaching artists, the students create, produce and perform an original play. The program culminates in a week-long performance tour

ending at Next Act Theatre with the final benefit performance. During the summer of 2016, Next Actors celebrated its 19th season.



Next Actors 2014

2005 - 2010

These years saw more changes for Next Act. Wright left to assume the Artistic Directorship at Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, the Off Broadway building was sold, and Next Act once again faced the challenge of creating a new theatre space. In 2010, Next Act staged its final production at the Off Broadway, the 2010 Next Actors Benefit performance. The Journey Home Capital Campaign to build Next Act's new Walker's Point facility had already begun with critical initial support from subscribers and generous benefactors David and Julia Uihlein.

2010 - 2011

The three-production 2010-11 Next Act season was housed at the Tenth Street Theatre while offices and rehearsal space were established at 219 N Milwaukee Street. Construction for Next Act's new home began in May 2011 with a tight completion deadline of October 6, when the first performance of the 22nd season was scheduled.

2011 - 2012

The 2011-12 season was another beginning for

Next Act as the company christened its new home at 255 S Water Street, premiering with the first performance of THE EXONERATED. Next Act now has a dynamic new home with 152 seats that embrace an intimate, three-sided thrust stage.

The new facility brought with it an expansion of the mission: to provide affordable performance space for other companies, emerging groups and independent artists.



The Exonerated
by Jessica Blank & Erik Jensen
2011 - 2012

2012 - present

Shortly before the 2014-15 season began, Kakuk lost his long battle to cancer. "He has truly given us his all, and Next Act survives as a testament to his determination and commitment," Ceasarini said. The last four seasons have seen the company grow into its new space, retire all construction debt, complete theatre improvement projects and welcome new patrons to Next Act's home.

Next Act Theatre continues to offer a four-production season of provocative and compelling plays intended to stimulate thought, foster the exchange of ideas and promote the development of new perspectives and understanding.

Next Act Theatre's 29 YEAR JOURNEY in pictures.



Centennial Hall
Downtown Library



Off Broadway Theatre



255 S Water St

2018 - 2019

Outside Mullingar by John Patrick Shanley
The Twelve Dates of Christmas
by Ginna Hoben
Blood at the Root by Dominique Morisseau
How to Write a New Book for the Bible
by Bill Cain

2017 - 2018

Silent Sky by Lauren Gunderson
The Secret Mask by Rick Chafe
Equivocation by Bill Cain
I And You by Lauren Gunderson

2016 - 2017

The Taming by Lauren Gunderson
UnSilent Night
by John Kishline and Edward Morgan
The Other Place by Sharr White
Bloomsday by Steven Dietz

2015 - 2016

Back of the Throat by Yussef El Guindi
Bravo, Caruso! by William Luce
Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992
by Anna Deavere Smith
Motherhood Out Loud
Conceived by Susan R. Rose & Joan Stein

2014 - 2015

Welcome Home, Jenny Sutter
by Julie Marie Myatt
Heresy by A.R. Gurney
No Child... by Nilaja Sun
TEN QUESTIONS to Ask your Biology Teacher
about Evolution by Stephen Massicotte

2013 - 2014

Perfect Mendacity by Jason Wells
Groucho: A Life in Revue
Book, lyrics & music by Arthur Marx &
Robert Fisher
Race by David Mamet
Three Views of the Same Object
by Henry Murray

2012-2013

microcrisis by Mike Lew
It's a Wonderful Life Live Radio Show
Adapted by Mary MacDonald Kerr
The Clockmaker by Stephen Massicotte
Grace by Craig Wright

2011-2012

The Exonerated
by Jessica Blank & Erik Jensen
Sylvia by A.R. Gurney
Vigil by Morris Panych
One Time by Richard Lyons Conlon

2010 - 2011

Four Places by Joel Drake Johnson
Big Boys by Rich Orloff
A Sleeping Country by Melanie Marnich

2009 - 2010

Mary's Wedding by Stephen Massicotte
7 Stories by Morris Panych
Purgatorio by Ariel Dorfman
The Value Of Names by Jeffrey Sweet

2008 - 2009

Lombardi: The Only Thing by Eric Simonson
Murderers by Jeffrey Hatcher
Going to St. Ives by Lee Blessing
The Pavilion by Craig Wright

2007 - 2008

An Interview with Paul Robeson
by Paul A. Mabon, Sr. & John Kishline
Greetings! by Tom Dudzick
Faith Healer by Brian Friel
The Mystery of Irma Vep: A Penny Dreadful
by Charles Ludlam

2006 - 2007

Last of the Boys by Steven Dietz
Mercy of a Storm by Jeffrey Hatcher
Paradise by Glyn O'Malley
Ears on a Beatle by Mark St. Germain

2005 - 2006

Coyote on a Fence by Bruce Graham
Red Herring by Michael Hollinger
The Retreat from Moscow
by William Nicholson
An Infinite Ache by David Schulner

2004 - 2005

Dear Esther by Richard Rashke
The Voice of the Prairie by John Olive
The Goodbye People by Herb Gardner
Master Harold... and the boys
by Athol Fugard

2003 - 2004

Mindgame by Anthony Horowitz
Bravo, Caruso! by William Luce
Between Men and Cattle by Richard Kalinoski
Stones in His Pockets by Marie Jones

2002 - 2003

Taking Leave by Nagle Jackson
Rough Crossing by Tom Stoppard
Between East and West by Richard Nelson
Bea's Niece by David Gow

2001 - 2002

Bee-Luther-Hatchee by Thomas Gibbons
Visiting Mr. Green by Jeff Baron
What the Butler Saw by Joe Orton
Side Man by Warren Leight

2000 - 2001

Down The Road by Lee Blessing
Laughter on the 23rd Floor by Neil Simon
Blood Knot by Athol Fugard
Fallen Angels by Noël Coward

1999 - 2000

Hauptmann by John Logan
Room Service by John Murray & Allen Boretz
A Night in November by Marie Jones
My Thing of Love by Alexandra Gersten

1998 - 1999

How I Learned to Drive by Paula Vogel
Greetings! by Tom Dudzick
The Dresser by Ronald Harwood
Below the Belt by Richard Dresser

1997 - 1998

Artis Generis by James DeVita /
Descent by Tom Patrick
Stage Struck by Simon Gray
Someone Who'll Watch Over Me
by Frank McGuinness
The Price by Arthur Miller

1996 - 1997

Sylvia by A.R. Gurney
The Real Thing by Tom Stoppard
Three Viewings by Jeffrey Hatcher
Kindertransport by Diane Samuels

1995 - 1996

The Destiny of Me by Larry Kramer
Noël and Gertie by Sheridan Morley
Fool for Love by Sam Shepard
Relatively Speaking by Alan Ayckbourn

1994 - 1995

Marvin's Room by Scott McPherson
On the Open Road by Steve Tesich
Billy Bishop Goes to War
by John Gray and Eric Peterson

1993 - 1994

Lips Together, Teeth Apart
by Terrence McNally
The Firebugs by Max Frisch
Evelyn and the Polka King by John Olive

1992 - 1993

Brief Lives by Patrick Garland
Incommunicado by Tom Dulack
Private Lives by Noël Coward

1991 - 1992

The Boys Next Door by Tom Griffin
And a Nightingale Sang by C.P. Taylor
Cobb by Lee Blessing
Italian American Reconciliation
by John Patrick Shanley

1990 - 1991

A Wrinkle in Time
from the book by Madeleine L'Engle
Reckless by Craig Lucas
The Voice of the Prairie by John Olive
Haven for the Disillusioned
conceived by Helena Dyrnerman
Sea Marks by Gardner McKay